

Redemption in "the scarlet letter" essay sample

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Redemption is the act of rescuing oneself as by payment of ransom or by complying with specific peremptory requests and demands. Traditional Puritan society began with the thoroughgoing conviction of sin. After Adam and Eve committed their sin of deception and adultery every man and woman after that was thought to be born with a darkened soul of a vile sinner. Puritans thought that the only way for all the corrupt sinners of the world to redeem themselves was by the grace of God. Prynne, according to the beliefs and values of the Puritans, is an extreme sinner; she has gone against the Puritan ways, by committing the unforgivable sin of adultery. For this irrevocably cruel sin, she must wear a symbol of shame and humiliation for the rest of her godforsaken life.

The scarlet letter is an evaluation and study of the results of sin on the hearts, minds and souls of Hester, Pearl, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. In every case the effect changes the character significantly. Once the characters have indulged themselves in sin and transgression some of them are unable to deal with the consequences. Sin corrupts their souls, darkens their vision, and weakens their spirits defense against unwanted tainted temptation. Along with the harsh consequences of sin, also comes unexpected benefits. Each character is redeemed in some event or occurrence. Sin extends Hester's strength and capabilities to serve others.

Through out the novel Hester exhibits the strong ability to suppress the inferior attitudes and views the townspeople have of her and use them to her own advantage by proving she holds unique abilities. She nurses the sick

back to health, brings food to the homes of the criples and poor and she is also an advocate for those who are in trouble. By wearing the scarlet letter Hester realizes that it does not diminish her worth but allows her to prove to others that she is "able" (p. 158). The townspeople begin to see Hester's true abilities and skills "Many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength" (pg. 148).

When Chillingworth confronts Hester by the shore he tells her that the town magistrates were recently arguing about whether or not to let her remove the scarlet letter, she replies: "It lies not in the pleasure of the magistrates to take off this badge.... Were I worthy to be quit of it, it would fall away of its own nature, or be transformed into something that should speak a different purport" (pg. 155). By refusing to take off the letter, Hester reveals that she feels a sense of pride and dignity. She will not take it off until it comes off on its own and until she will wear it as a badge of stability. In actuality Hester can never really escape her representation as an emblem of something more significant. She is redeemed by acknowledging the scarlet letter as part of her identity and existence.

In Dimmesdale's case, accepting his sin spiritualizes him and allows him to confront the critical townspeople confessing that he is "the one sinner of the world" (p 174). Dimmesdale serves as his own assessor when he admits his crime to the townspeople. He anticipates his own death, there by breaking away from the standard beliefs and customs of Puritan society.

After Dimmesdale confesses his sin of adultery, Pearl kisses his lips, in this instant her demonic "spell is broken" (p. 175) and she develops all her human characteristics, promising to "grow up amid human joy and sorrow"(p 175). Pearl finally receives an "earthly father" (p. 175) when Dimmesdale admits his sin.

Chillingworth is cold hearted, cruel and merciless. Throughout the story he begins to resemble the devil by the his actions and the way he appears. He does not receive redemption for demonic insignia do not receive such things. Chillingworth loses his chance for revenge against Dimmesdale. When Dimmesdale dies Chillingworth no longer has a chance for avengement because his life line has been removed.

Nathaniel Hawthorne is a descendant of Puritans, so he is able to conform and understand the strong traditions of sin. I believe that Hawthorne views sin and transgression as something to grow and learn from. Each of the characters have committed some sort of crime which they eventually come to terms with by understanding its importance. Hawthorne considers sin as a maturing force which will eventually open the sinners eyes to broadened perspectives on their mistakes.

I think that we should all accept our mistakes, evil-doing, sins and transgressions as part of being human. We do something wrong and learn to not repeat the same action. We must not hide or mask or sins for they are part of our identity as human beings and will always make up a part of our identity. No matter the severity of a our sin, one can redeem oneself by

acknowledging the wrong doing and asking for forgiveness by the grace of god.